

## Methods of Evangelism at ISU

### Tom Collins

#### EVOKE

##### About the Ethnographer

###### Reflections

I chose a religious based question because I am truly interested in why people chose some religions over others. I just like the topic of religion in general because in a sense it makes us who we are and it is the basis of our moral codes and ethics. I think the main challenge of field work is getting out there interacting with other people. Let's face it it is hard to talk to people sometimes and for me I find it difficult to interact with older authoritative figures which I will have to do a lot of for the research. Another thing that will probably come up is scheduling conflicts with some of the interviewees. If I want to interview reverends, pastors, priests etc I'm going to have to accommodate for their schedules which are generally always hectic, but I guess I will just have to see how it goes and roll with the punches.

#### EXPLORE

##### Question

**What questions is your inquiry contingent upon?**

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Revised preliminary question 1

To understand why non-christian groups on campus do not "advertise" as much as the Christian groups.

Ultra Revised question 1

Why non-christian groups do not evangelize as much as Christian groups and how this relates to the lack of diversity at ISU.

3rd revision on question 1

Why students seek religion at universities. Specifically why do ISU students join religious groups and how does this effect them?

University Document

Here's a link to my document

[http://www2.cob.ilstu.edu/jmbeggs/m231CH14.rev\\_files/frame.htm#slide0005.htm](http://www2.cob.ilstu.edu/jmbeggs/m231CH14.rev_files/frame.htm#slide0005.htm)

I didn't exactly find a document per se, but rather I found a power point lecture on religious subcultures in the United States. The power point is based on Chapter 14 of Consumer Behavior. The chapter goes over the religious demographic in America and basically what kinds of people belong to these religions. In the power point is a chart of each religion and in the chart it describes things such as the percentage of people that belong, and what makes them different from other religions. Specifically the religions that are described are Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, and Islam. While this doesn't seem too interesting I believe it gives us a better insight into the general minds of these

groups.

For the most part I find it to be interesting because the researchers used some sort of ethnography to come up with these charts. It really doesn't say how they figured out this information, but since it is a marketing class I can only guess they used surveys and basic interviews to get a basic demographic into these religious subcultures. Another thing I like about it is that it gives you something to expect when speaking to these groups. Although these characteristics are very very general it gives us something to help us understand the average Christian or Muslim in America.

Preliminary question

I hope to find out why non-Christian groups do not evangelize like this Christian groups on campus. When I walk around campus I see all sorts of posters for Christian groups, but I don't see any for non-Christian groups and I want to know why.

## **Plan**

### **How will you go about answering your inquiry?**

I'm going to start out by finding some of the groups. Then I might talk to some of the group leaders to understand why they're not "in your face" like the other groups on campus. Right now that's just about all I got, but I'm sure as I go on I'll figure out more things.

## **OBSERVE**

### **What observations, or findings are you encountering in your research?**

I conducted an interview with a high ranking member of Campus Crusade for Christ. I went into the interview with out a set of questions because I wanted to keep it more conversational than an interrogation. I think it worked because I got all of the information I wanted to know without asking tedious questions. Just by asking one thing he pretty much opened up and told me pretty much everything without me having to ask. I did have to prod him on a little bit though for certain information, but it was more like gentle nudging to that topic. In the end I got information about the methods they use (they use flyers, word of mouth, meetings, newspaper ads, e-mails, information booths) about how large the organization is (global), what group they focus on (college students) and what affiliation they have to the churches in the community (no real affiliations though the non-denominational churches help out a little by letting them use church space if they need it).

Visual Data

I actually have a tiny book Called "Would You Like to know God Personally? I find it to be extremely important because of it evangelical importance. I have recieved these mini-books before and inside it eases you into Christianity by explaining what it takes to be "saved". It has a few Bible passages to help support them and help you as a Christian. Through this little book you can help you reach out to Campus Crusade for Christ by giving you addresses to contact them. I think it is a wonderful tool because what it does is that it gives people time to look over fundamental beliefs and take in all the info on their own time.

When I started this project my idea of the relationship between the community and the university was that of ISU and the surrounding area, but now it turned into my university

and my community. The unique thing with this particular community is that it is symbiotic. Normal and ISU combine to make a unique community if one went without the other it certainly wouldn't be the same community. The tie between them is that the school is as much the community as the community is. Sure there are some other things that make Normal well Normal, but for the most part it is ISU and vice versa. Everything that happens in the community effects ISU and again vice versa.

The extended place method links the micro and macro. So I will have to go to campus meetings and then to some of the area churches that spnsor these campus events to see how things work on both levels.

I chose my interviewee becuase he was accessible and I wanted to know why he chose ISU. Basically I found it interesting because he had his choice of schools to go to and I just wanted to know why.

Basically he told me that he couldn't afford U of I and opted to go here instead. He also said that becuase he wanted to be a history ed major that this school made the most sense after U of I.

I think that the interview was useful becuase it gave us the opportunity to figure out what an interview was like and how to take notes while interviewing a person. Also, the whole annonymity thing was quite a challenge becuase it's ahrd to describe a conversation while keeping that person's identity hidden.

I was not able to go to any evernts based on my question, but I was able to go to that mini party thing on the quad last monday. Like I said it didn't have anything to do with my question, but I still found it important becuase I was still able to study the people at the event. I go tot he event at 630 and noticed the huge line for the free food. Many of the students were happy because of the free food and stayed to eat until the Guerilla Theater troupe went on. They went acted out many different social issues and this seemed to really bore and upset some of the students. I heard from some of the people sitting near me that this was lame and that they already knew what racism was and to be open minded about homosexuality. All in all they got a very negative reaction from the people I sat with.

This shwos that students either do not care about social issues or they have been bombarded with these issues since they were little and now they just don't want to hear about it. Another thing that I noticed was that many people just checked things out for a minute then they just left. I wasn't able to tell if it was due tot the "entertainment" or the really long lines for food.

## **DISCUSS**

### **Discuss your inquiry, taking care to separate speculation from fact or data**

#### **Research report**

The issue that I wish to discuss is that of the religious groups and the evangelism that is brought to Illinois State by said groups. I wanted to look at the methods these groups used and what they hoped to accomplish by employing these methods. Also, I wanted to see if these groups had any qualities in particular that they were looking for in members. Evangelism on campus is a major issue because of its publicity. As a student you are completely overwhelmed by these methods because of their frequency. So with this constantly in our faces I wanted to see if their methods were successful .

While trying to gather data I discovered one very important thing. I discovered that one of the only methods for acquiring data is the interview. I tried participant observation and even social mapping, but in the end interviewing subjects was pretty much my only source of information. It's not that the other methods are not useful, they are but they were not giving me the information that I needed. By interviewing people in these religious organizations I began to understand the types of methods that they employed as well as possible recruitment requirements. However, participant observation did help me to understand some of the information that I got from these interviews so I guess I shouldn't say that the other forms of data gathering were useless to me. Another way I looked for data was by looking for evidence of evangelism. All I had to do was open my eyes and I would find some evidence in the cafeterias, on the sidewalk, or on announcement boards. In a college campus I suppose one of the most important things a student can do is to keep their eyes open and you'll probably find something that's relevant.

One of the first things I tried to find out the methods that religious organizations used to evangelize. The group that I focused on used several different methods to spread the word. The most prominent thing that they used were flyers placed on the tables in the cafeteria. Roughly every few weeks the group would place a flyer with an attention getter and underneath they would have a meeting time and place in case you were interested. Generally they would only mention Jesus once and they would have a little sentence on the bottom telling readers the name of the organization. According to one of my interviewees whom we will refer to as I2 said that the main purpose of the flyers were to put the idea of attending a meeting into the back of the readers mind. After that response I asked I2 what brought people to the meetings if the flyers didn't already do so. I2's response caught me off guard I2 said "the main reason people come is because they are brought to the meeting by a pre-existing member". So the main method that they use is word of mouth. According to I2 that's pretty much the only way they can really get members is by telling them about the meetings verbally and inviting them along. My other source I1, from now on, said that they generally find it easier to recruit from the dorms. I1 said that through word of mouth you get one person who lives in the dorms to tell the others on the floor. That one person then brings one more who in return gets his friends to go and so forth and so on. In the beginning of the year I decided to go to a religious based event, but I didn't quite feel like going alone so I asked a friend of mine to come with. Afterwards he told me that he probably wouldn't have gone unless I asked him to. This is by far the most important aspect of evangelism on this campus. Without the verbal evangelism, from what I gathered from my sources, the majority of religious based RSO's would not be able to exist due to lack of participation. In fact I2 was recruited by word of mouth. A friend of I2 encouraged I2 to attend a meeting and when I2 did attend I2 enjoyed it thoroughly and is now a part of that group. The group that I have been doing most of my research with actually has its own committees to figure out evangelical events as well as ways to evangelize such as the production of flyers and other non-verbal methods.

After I poked and prodded about the methods they used I decided to figure out if there were any specific types of people that they looked for to join their groups. Almost immediately I realized that they probably didn't because it is a Christian religious group after all. The majority of Christian groups do not look for specific people because all are worthy of Jesus' message. That's the one thing that matters the most to these groups. Without the spread of the "Word of Christ" they feel as if they are not doing their duty. According to the second book of Timothy chapter 4 verse 5 "do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" This just further tells us that evangelism is one of the most important aspects of the religious groups. The students involved are typical students that attend ISU. They usually live on campus in the dorms. As I said

earlier most of the evangelism occurred in the dorms so this explains why most of the members live on campus. Also, the methods that they used were successful especially word of mouth. When a friend asks you to do something you are more inclined to do it. So this is why word of mouth works so well. Eventually friends just keep on bringing friends so it creates this huge social network for the group to tap into to get more members. The flyers on the other hand do not really seem to do much other than remind current members of the time and place of their meetings. However, it does kind of put that idea into peoples heads and it does appeal to new students who do not have many social influences. So when they see these flyers and are interested they know exactly where and when to go.

The research I conducted helps to give us an insight into a very vocal aspect of religious groups on campus. Everyday a massive amount of students see or hear some form of evangelism. Whether it is on the walk to class, in class or even in the cafeteria where you might eat everyday these things just permeate our lives and there really is no escaping it. So instead of being ignorant of something that we live with almost everyday why not get a better understanding of how and why it is done? So how does it affect a general university? Well it is fairly easy it exposes even the most sheltered individuals to religion of all kinds. From Christianity to pagan beliefs we are constantly reminded that there are more types of religion out there than we might be currently aware of. Some of these groups seek to remove the blindfold of ignorance from peoples eyes so that they can start to understand why some of these groups believe in what they believe or act the way they do. Religion without a doubt motivates us and this is why it is important to understand these groups on a general level.

With ISU in particular it's important for us to understand why these groups evangelize because ISU is a dominantly Christian campus. In fact ISU has over 20 religious based R.S.O's. As I said earlier we are constantly being reminded of religion through these flyers and other evangelical methods. So we have a duty to better understand why this is occurring especially on our campus. It's not just giving a better insight into an entity that lurks in the shadows, but rather a massive life style choice. There are hundreds of students that belong to religious groups and they in turn begin to influence other students on campus.

As I look back on my research I realized that to fully understand this topic I need to research different groups instead of focusing on one or two large groups. Also, I would love to look at other campuses and their response to evangelism. To bring it more home I need to talk to people who do not belong to these groups and see how they react and hopefully get a decent insight into people who are on the "fence" and are thinking about why they should or shouldn't join the group. Overall I just need to do some more background research and expand my own horizons and look at a few other sources to fully appreciate this aspect of religion.

## **REFLECT**

### **Link**

**Connect with other resources and materials.**

### **Linking Up**

I was able to find some data on how many religious based RSO's there are on campus and that would be 20 with 19 being Christian based. Also, nine of the groups have affiliations to the local

churches precisely 16 of them in some shape, way or form. I wasn't able to find out how many belong to each group, but if 30 people have to be a part of the group for it to be an RSO then it would be roughly around 600 however as we went over earlier that the number isn't very accurate. Another thing that may or may not be helpful is that there are 11 religious volunteer programs.

I was able to find two articles for my research an article called The New School Spirit from U.S. News & World Report, Feb 14, 2005 and another titled Very religious students have some 'liberal' views from The Christian Century, Sept 21, 2004. Both of these articles relate to my question in that they both kind of tell how and why college students seek religion on campus and how this effects there moral views and even in one extreme how this can effet the campus as a whole. Below are the articles as attached files. I do not know if they will work or not, but what the hell I might as well try. When I get a better chance to read these article sin greater detail I might have to update my question yet again, but I think I'm on to something.

***Files:***

[US NEWS AND WORLD REPORT.wps](#) (Wed 09/28/2005 13:16)

[the christian century.wps](#) (Wed 09/28/2005 13:18)